



Acting Gov. Jane Swift, Celtic guard Paul Pierce and Mayor Thomas M. Menino all stopped by the Mozart School in Roslindale last week to read to students there.

# A Swift reminder about the importance of reading

By Deborah Elsner  
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If nothing else pans out for her, acting Gov. Jane Swift has a future teaching reading at the Mozart Elementary School in Roslindale.

During an event for the 2002 Reading is Fundamental Community Reading Challenge at the Mozart last week, Principal Albert Taylor complimented Swift's teaching style and jokingly suggested that she go into teaching after leaving the State House.

"Funny thing, I'm in the market for a new job," Swift said with a laugh. Two days earlier, of course, she said she was abandoning her floundering gubernatorial campaign.

Swift was one of several dignitaries who descended on the Mozart School last Thursday to teach the students the importance of reading and writing — and to help the school win a nationwide reading competition.

The challenge, also called "Adventures in Reading," is a nationwide campaign by the country's largest child literacy organization to get students excited about reading. The two-week contest, during which all the students are asked to read at home every night and record time spent on literacy, ends next week at the Mozart.

The Mozart School is competing against the Beethoven Elementary School in West Roxbury and 15 other elementary schools throughout Massachusetts. Statewide winners will receive money to buy new books for every student and to hold a week-long literacy celebration in May. National winners will send a delegation from the school to Washington, D.C., for an awards ceremony.

Schools get extra points for having local officials and community members come into the school and read to the children. Swift was joined at the Mozart by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Celtics players Paul Pierce and Mark Blount, State Rep. Gloria Fox, D-Roxbury, Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley, District 4 City Councilor Charles Yancey and others.

A special appearance by Arthur the Aardvark from PBS was one of the highlights as the television star posed for pictures with the mayor and the governor. Swift, a mother of three small children, noted that a picture with Arthur was a surefire way to impress her children.

All the officials who came emphasized the importance of reading.

"One of the most important things you can learn in school is not just how to read, but to love to read," Swift told the fourth-grade class. "I'm still learning effective reading skills so I can better do my job."

Pierce, who is the captain of the Celtics Read to Achieve literacy team, told the same class that reading is a big part of his daily routine. "Reading is very important. I read every day, whether it's a magazine, a newspaper or a book," he said. "I read every day to broaden my education."

The excitement was tangible in the halls of the Mozart all morning as public officials, sports stars and school administrators swarmed in an out of classrooms.

"If they could take one thing we said from the day and use it, then it's worth it," Blount said.

Blount and Pierce distributed Celtics tickets to the top readers in each class.

With the budget process nearing and cuts looming for the Boston Public Schools, events like this that are funded by private organizations are more and more important, Menino said.

"The business community of

Boston understands how important reading is, so [programs like these] will continue to grow and prosper," Menino said, calling Reading Is Fundamental one of his favorite programs.

The mayor added that while budget cuts are imminent he is working with the Boston School Committee to save as many classroom programs

as possible. "We're doing the best we can to keep classrooms sacrosanct," he said.

And as for Swift's future career plans, she did not discount education entirely. "Education is the issue that propelled me into public service. It is my passion," she said.

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PROGRESS